/13 cont./

576 enter a house is decided with the same ceremoniousness. Or, for example, when two horsemen meet each other in the forest. If the younger of the two has something to say to the older one, he must dismount and speak while standing on the ground. At that point, the older one urges him to speak without dismounting.

/14/ The language of the Abkhaz also bears witness to their politeness. In conversation they often use such expressions as: "I ask that your sickness will pass on to me," "may I become the victim of your sicknesses," "may I be the victim instead of you," "may I go around the place where you are lying," etc. In keeping with this last expression, an Abkhaz woman, when visiting her sick foster-child or a person she has not seen for a [608] [755] long time, walks three times around him with the words, "utsge mtsuge seizgat," i.e. "may I carry away your sickness, your misfortune."

For every occasion in life, the Abkhaz has a special greeting, in which are expressed his wishes for prosperity, strength, victory, fertility, profit, etc. In this repertoire of various Abkhaz greetings, there are even some which are especially meant for occasions when one meets persons who are going to a horse-race, greetings for the person who is arranging 181 the races, and so forth. And this is quite understandable and natural for a people such as the Abkhaz, for whom horse and arms constitute the most beloved things, which they have been accustomed to value highly almost from the cradle. The children [565] of members of the upper classes in the very first years of their lives become excellent riders and weapon-bearers. Pistol, [411] dagger, saber, knife, and a whole arsenal of weapons are the [293] constant adornment of every Abkhaz man. For him there is no greater pleasure than to ride armed from head to foot, a burka thrown over him, in the company of his comrades, singing a merry song. Without a horse and arms, life is not worth living to an Abkhaz!

•526 Besides horse-races and trick-riding, the following games [541] are worth noting in the life of the Abkhaz: 1. the ball-game, 538 2. arkil-riki, and 3. stone-throwing. The folk-music and folk-poetry of the Abkhaz are extremely meager.

/24 cont./

584 from which she does not emerge until a feast is held in the big house. Then she is led into the house, and one of the elderly friends of the family, or the father himself, puts a piece of liver on a spit and begins to pray and to express wishes that the couple before him may be happy, prolific, etc.

When the groom returns from the house of his bride's parents to that of his father, he again is not allowed to show himself to his parents and older relatives. This, too, would be considered /25/ indecent. He does not appear until after the feast has been given by his father. Now the same blessings and wishes that were given when the bride was led out of her amhara are repeated, and the groom gives presents to his mother, father, uncle, foster father, and in general to all older relatives. This feast bears the name aphkhasharkhe (portion of shame, remover of shame).

585 After the preparation of the dowry, the bride's parents
[583] invite their future son-in-law in order to entrust their daughter to him; at the appointed time the groom comes to get her with his friends and her girl-friends. On the way home with the bride,
[533] the marriage song bedniera (happiness) is sung, there is trick-
[526] riding on horses, pistol-shooting, etc. When they are approaching the house of the groom, they send someone ahead to announce the arrival of the bride to the groom's father and mother. Such a messenger stops somewhere near the gates of the house and
[202] without a word fires a pistol in the air. In the house he is offered some honey or sugar.

Meanwhile the wedding procession reaches the house. Here the friends and girl-friends amuse themselves for a while with a huge round loaf of wheaten bread, throwing it three times over the bride and over the house and breaking it into pieces, which are picked up by those present. After this the bride is led into the house, at the entrance of which two men hold swords crossed overhead. At the threshold she is offered honey or sugar, with the words, "May God give you a tongue as sweet." After the bride enters the house she is handed a cup filled with grains of gomi, on top of which an egg has been placed. Then she is led three times around the hearth while she scatters the grains of gomi. The bride is then seated, and they hand her a little boy

/30 cont./

765 526 After the meal, the dzhiriti takes place, reminiscent of the tournaments of the Middle Ages. Now the fair sex occupies the passageway near the house. Young men on horseback assemble in front of the beauties and vie with each other in attempts to display their wit, inventiveness, and knowledge in speeches, and their bravery in the dzhigitovka /trick-riding/ which will follow.

The main dzhigitovka, tarchei /see foreign text/, consists of the following. One of the competing riders accepts from the host of the feast /31/ or from one of the beauties some strips of chintz, a small sewn boot, a rosary of chestnuts, or something else, and, holding this tarchei in his hand, he gallops ahead with it while the other lads pursue him and try to catch him and take away the tarchei. If someone is successful in this, the tarchei passes into the hands of the one who has taken it away from the first rider; then that one races off, and the others again chase after him. The one who escapes capture and manages to bring the tarchei back to the place where the competition started is the winner. The horsemen's competition does not end with this, however; they continue to prance around on horseback, pick up money from the ground at full gallop, etc.

765 541 Sometimes there are also horse-races at the mourning banquet. Children of eight to nine years of age are horsemen. A goal is pointed out to the competitors, and the first one to reach it wins something. In this case, the hosts present the winners with the horse of the deceased, with some animal, or with a khak (arshin or span) of chintz.

VI.

Religious Beliefs of the Abkhaz

771 "Up to the year 1867," wrote Mr. A. in his excellent article on the Abkhaz, "the religious situation among the Abkhaz was absurd in the extreme. One found there the rites of all religious doctrines, from fetishism to Christianity. These people had no precise conception of any religion, but adopted from all of them

[772 cont.]

C 533 Art and play. The old traditions of the past and of the deeds of the Cherkess were preserved by the wandering minstrels (gegwako); they used to sing of them at feasts and festivals, whereas nowadays they present hardly anything but songs of congratulation and praise and comic songs. A 538 As far as is known, the folk literature of the Abkhaz is rich in religious and festive songs and prayer formulas, and probably also in heroic and other

A [534]

Fig. 452. Guitar with two strings, Abkhaz (1/7 natural size) (Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg).

A 534 songs. As accompaniment to the singing, a two or three-stringed guitar is used (Abkhaz, ap'khirtsa, see Fig. 452) or the Mingrel lute (atšangur), the handle of which is sometimes carved or shaped in the form of a head. In addition, the C 534 Cherkess still use long flutes (tšebizga) of reed or metal, with three finger-holes, and triangular harps (pšine-duk-okyo), which also occur among the Swan; they are 20 to 70 centimeters wide and have 40-centimeter-long hair strings attached to the resonator and to pegs above.

A 535 The favorite dance among the Abkhaz is the "shoulder-dance," in which the young people hold each other by the hand, [773] turn around as they sing, and from time to time leap in C 535 the air. Among the Cherkess there were girls' dances (denyola), in which they hopped in one place, round dances of men and girls (uk) combined with singing, and wild war-dances (kofa) performed by a single fully-armed man.

A ● 536 The principal amusements of the men are contests of strength, stone-casting, ball-throwing, and the like. The Abkhaz used to fight duels with the sword, usually while sitting

A 526 [773 cont.]
on horseback, or they would arrange javelin battles in which, divided into two companies, they rode against one another, threw long, white sticks (džerid) at one another, and caught them in flight or picked them up from the ground (cf. p. 715 [untranslated]).

c) The Chechen and Lezgin

C 131 The territory of the Chechen takes in the forested northern slope of the mountain range that branches off from the main chain from Tebulos and Diklos toward the northeast and separates Chechnya from Dagestan, and the flatland lying in front up to the Terek. C. 101 Their neighbors to the east are the Kymyk [Kumyk], to the north the Cossacks, to the west the Kabardin and Osset, to the south the Khevsur, Tush, and Lezgin. The western tribe, the Ingush, are partly cut off by a strip of Russian settlement between Vladikavkaz and Grosniy, as are the Chechen between Grosniy and Mozdok, who were settled on the Terek in 1866.

D 131 [133] The Lezgin inhabit nearly treeless, barren Dagestan [774] (= mountain country), which extends southeast of the above-mentioned mountain range up to the Baba-dagh north of Shemakha, that is, the river districts of the Samur, the Ruba, and D 101 the upper Sulak. Their neighbors to the east on the Caspian coastal plain are the Azerbaijani, Tatars, and the Kymyk, to the northwest the Chechen, to the west the Tush, to the southwest the Kakhetian Georgians, to the south the Azerbaijani, Tatars, and the Tat. [Fig. 453 appears here.]

C 105 648 The Georgian, Persian, Armenian, and Arabic authors report nothing about the origin of these two linguistically, but not culturally, different peoples. It is known only that since the time of Genghis Khan Mongolian and Tatar legions have been continually oppressing the Chechen and have held them subject in part until their power was broken by the Russians. They themC 173 selves give Nakhashé on the upper Argun as the tribal home of all the Chechen, and their name Nakhchuy comes from it. Popular legends speak of a man from the high Caucasus, of an Arab, and

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
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small salt *akwakwər*. They then go out into the garden and eat their scones in silence in the dark, at the same time entreating *Làmilakh* to bestow upon them a happy married life. Whoever finds the "stake of happiness" in his or her scone must celebrate this stroke of luck by giving a party for all the participants. On the following day the *Làmilakh* party is given at the house of the lucky one. After consuming the little *akwakwər* all go back into the house and sit down to a supper which is also an occasion for gaiety. In order to maintain the feeling of thirst at its strongest, no one is allowed to drink anything. The Abkhasians believe that the thirsty person will be given a drink by the one with whom he or she is fated to share conjugal life. In such manner do the young people of Abkhasia tell their fortunes.[1]

II. Àmshap'

In this chapter I have collected together all those rites grouped around the festival of Easter, called in Abkhasian *Àmshap'*.[2] The *Àmshap'* celebrations began[3] two weeks before Easter Sunday, and continued for exactly three weeks, during which time custom forbade working in the field, except in the cotton field and the kitchen garden. On Sunday, two weeks before Easter Day, the Abkhasians decorated their houses with the first spring flowers, and this Sunday is called *aioba*, which is derived, probably, from the Megrelian *aia*, violet. Until *aioba*, playing football or other games was forbidden. After that day, however, seasonal games were in full swing. Dressed in their finest attire, the whole population gave themselves up to public sports. Among the most popular pastimes were football, wrestling, stone throwing, trick-riding, dancing, singing, and *akyəbir* (in Geo. *riktap'ela*, "game of skittles," according to Tchubinashvili's or Tchubinov's Dictionary).

The following Sunday—Palm Sunday—the Abkhasians call *baioba* (a "Megrelianization"). The name is derived from *a-baia*, a yellow flower which grows profusely in the fields of Abkhasia in the early spring.[4] On this day also the Abkhasians decorated their houses with flowers, particularly with *abaia*.

[1] *Anasp'a dzw* has its double in Guria and Imeret'i *bedis-kveri*, cracknel of fate, which is known also to the Tiflis Armenians. I think the Pshav *dzedzola* arose on this ground.

[2] It is, in my opinion, a compound word, consisting of *amsh*, day, and *ap'* (*yap'u*), accepted, appointed, fixed; *Àmshap'* thus denotes "pre-ordained day" (Geo. *mighebuli dghe*).

[3] These celebrations are no longer observed; they are traditional, and I am describing them from memory, or from the words of the Commission.

[4] According to Tchubinashvili (Tchubinov), and to R. Erist'avi (Eristov), *baia* is crows-foot, *ranunculus*. Erist'avi, considering the word to be Megrelo-Imero-Gurian, gives as its K'art'(l)ian equivalent *tskhviris-satskhela*. The word *a-bala*, in Abkhasian *a-mərtch*, is, according to the botanists of the Sukhum Botanical Garden, the equivalent of the Russian *lyutik tsdbl*.

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
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oak the Megrelians built a church in its honour, in which this icon rests to this day. It has not forgotten the Svans whom it often visits." My Megrelian informant is an inhabitant of Salkhino.

9. *Àhwza-rəmshap'*

Abkhasians call the first Sunday after Easter Low Sunday, *Àhwza-rəmshap'*, i.e. Pascha for women. This day is set apart for public games. Early in the morning everybody assembles in the public square where they indulge in all sorts of sport, chiefly, however, horse racing and tournaments. Next day the Abkhasians go back to work, and ordinary life is resumed.

The public games (on holidays) are continued till Whit Monday.

10. *Àdsyla-nəhwa*

In connection with *Àmshap'* mention may be made of two supplications, *Àdsyla-nəhwa* (cf. III (*d*)) and "*Supplication of the Leybaa*". I have not been lucky enough to have witnessed the latter ceremony, which, by the way, belongs to a cult of the Bzib Abkhasians.[1] The worship of the tree, so picturesquely described by ancient writers, such as Strabo, Procopius of Cæsarea, is preserved in a most conspicuous form with its sacred grove, in this supplication of the Leybaa *gvari*, as is also the name of the deity, in that of *Àdsyla-nəhwa*; *Àdsyla* denotes tree, *nəhwa* (*anəhwara*), praying, supplication. The deity of the tree itself is called *Àdsyla-intswakhwə*, wherein the latter part denotes "his (of the male rational being) part of god, deity". The Abkhasians in their religion personify and "intellectualize" all manifestations of life, and they strictly distinguish the gender of each of them.

In order to protect wanton children who roam about without restraint, and love to climb trees, the Abkhasians make offerings to the "spirit of the tree", entreating the "great part of the deity of the tree" to guard their children against falling off trees and hurting themselves. The objects offered are capon and cakes. The oak (*a-j*) they consider as the sacred tree, to which they make the offering; walnut-trees (particularly the hazel-nut-tree) and yoke-elms are "pure" trees. If someone falls from the tree they must dig up some coal from under the spot where the person fell; if no coal is found, the accident is regarded as serious; and the person will not survive the fall. An offering is also made to the "spirit of the tree" in the case of certain illnesses, as directed by sorceresses, the sick person being supposed to have fallen ill through having incurred the wrath of the spirit.

[1] About this see the article by N. Pateypa, in the *Collaborator of the Transcaucasian Mission* (in Russian), 1912, pp. 107–112, 124–7.